

sound words that we are to love, and the pattern of sound work which we are to engage in. To depart from the pattern God has given to the church is liberal by definition. One cannot arrive at a sound position by travelling in the opposite direction!

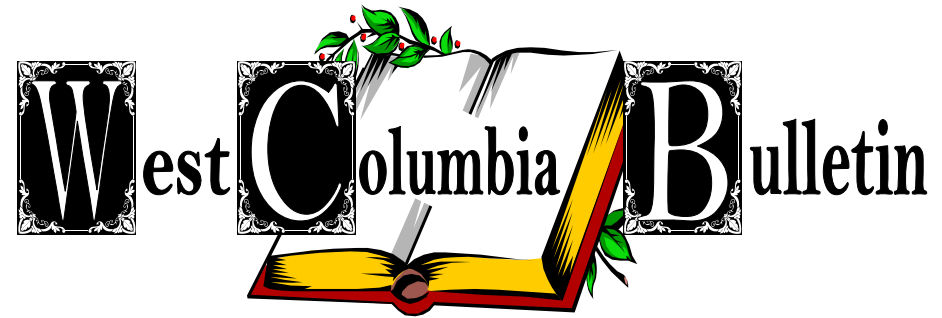
What is a liberal? A liberal Bible student is one who abandons God's pattern. In a word he takes **LIBERTIES** with God's will. He does not believe there is a pattern. For this reason he plays fast and loose with God's instructions.

Unfortunately, more and more people are sneering at the concept of Direct Statement, Approved Apostolic Example, and Necessary Inference as an appropriate hermeneutic. However, even those who sneer use the same concept when reading a document as mundane as the daily newspaper. Readers get the meaning of the text from direct statements, clear examples, and yes, even from inferences. Why then is it foolhardy to apply the same approach to God's word?

Those who have abandoned the sound approach to God's word have done so in an effort to be more "relevant" to a modern world. In reality, all the New Hermeneutic crowd has succeeded in doing is to drift farther and farther from the arena of sound doctrine.

Conclusion

Let us return to the plea of the New Testament and speak only as the oracles of God. Brethren who hold to liberalism often plead for unity. We fervently plead for the same. However, unity can never be achieved by compromising truth. Unity must be founded upon a strict adherence to sound doctrine. When we all speak the same thing we will be united (1 Corinthians 1:10).



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SOUND DOCTRINE

David Weaks

Paul warned Timothy that he faced a time in which men, generally, would reject truth. *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside unto fables"* (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Certainly, what was true in Timothy's day is true in our day. Many today are more interested in their own desires than with the will of God. These people search out teachers that will accommodate their desires, and in doing so, they willingly turn away from the truth and follow fables.

Unfortunately, this tendency is not limited to the religious world at large, but is also a characteristic of many who profess to be members of the church of Christ. Peter admonishes: *"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen"* (1 Peter 4:11). With These words the New Testament exhorts Christians to speak where the Bible speaks, and to be silent where the Bible is silent. However, an increasing number of God's

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people are insisting that we abandon this Biblical plea. It is avowed that we need a "New Hermeneutic," because we live in a world that is vastly different than the world that existed in the first century. Some say that book, chapter, and verse preaching is no longer valid. Friends, times may have changed, but sound doctrine is still valid and vital.

The Bible Requires A Sound Approach To Its Reading, Interpretation, And Application

The word sound that appears in 2 Timothy 4:3

means *healthy, whole*. When one says he is of sound mind and body he is affirming that he is possessed of all of his physical and mental faculties. In regard to doctrine, Paul warned Timothy that men would soon reject *healthful, wholesome* doctrine in favor of lies and fables.

It is the overwhelming contention of the New Testament that sound doctrine must be adhered to by all who serve the Lord. Paul exhorted Timothy to "Hold fast the *pattern of sound words* which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13). Notice, Timothy was

not allowed to play fast and loose with Paul's doctrine. Paul declared to the Corinthians that the words he wrote were the commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). Timothy's

only option was to endure, or "hold fast" to the pattern of sound words that he received from Paul. To abandon the pattern would be to abandon the commandments of the Lord. If not, why not?

Paul also bound Titus with a similar charge: "*But as for you, speak the things which are*

proper for sound doctrine:..." (Titus 2:1). It is interesting to me that in Paul's instructions to these two preachers he stressed adherence to sound doctrine. Yet, today, some contend that there is no pattern of sound words, therefore, we need a new hermeneutic. It seems obvious that those who are liberal in their approach, understanding, and application of God's word find themselves at odds with the inspired apostle Paul.

Not only are evangelists to adhere to and declare only sound doctrine, but elders in the Lord's church are to rule within the boundaries of sound doctrine. As Paul concluded the list which he gave to Titus of qualifications for the office of bishop, he had a word to say about one of the more serious areas of the elders work: "holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by *sound*

doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). This is one of the primary areas of the work of elders. Their job is to keep the church pure from influences that may destroy the soundness of the local church. Those who negatively influence the church, and whom the elders are to convict

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are those who gainsay. What does the gainsayer contradict? Apparently, from the context, he contradicts sound doctrine! Therefore, elders in the church are charged with the solemn responsibility to defend sound doctrine.

What Is Liberalism?

It has been proven over and over again: *The old ways are the best ways!* The old ways are not best because they are old, but they are old because they are right. God has given us, in His word, the pattern of